

Serial Number 09/742,438

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access, via a computer network, to a website that has been requested by the user, comprising the steps of:

after said user requests access to said website via the computer network by inputting an Internet uniform resource locator, causing client software on a computing device of the user to divert said access request to a proxy server rather than to said website indicated by the uniform resource locator;

an advertising server to present said proxy server presenting an interactive banner advertisement to the user, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

upon presentation of said banner advertisement, said proxy server preventing access to said website that was requested by the user before the user requested access to said website, unless an appropriate reply to said banner advertisement is submitted by the user, and

permitting access to said proxy server establishing a connection between the computing device of the user and the website only if the user submits, via the computer network, an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement[[],] and continuing to prevent said access to said website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said website is provided over a wireless network.

Serial Number 09/742,438

6. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said wireless network is a cellular network.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein a provider of the website downloads said client software to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website.

9. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim ~~8~~ 7, wherein said client software is resident on said user's computing device before said user requests access to said website.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim ~~11~~ 1, wherein said client software is a plug-in to an Internet browser installed on said user's computing device.

13. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein said plug-in is downloaded to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website as a pre-requisite to gaining access to said website.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 14 for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access, via a computer network, to a website that has been requested by the user, comprising the steps of:

Serial Number 09/742,438

after said user requests access to said website via the computer network, presenting an interactive banner advertisement to the user, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

upon presentation of said banner advertisement, preventing access to said website unless an appropriate reply to said banner advertisement is submitted by the user, and

establishing a connection between the computing device of the user and the website if the user submits, via the computer network, an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement,

wherein said website is a subscription-based service, and

further comprising the steps of,

before presenting said interactive banner advertisement to
the user, identifying said user and determining whether said user
has a subscription to said service, and wherein said step of
presenting said interactive banner advertisement is carried out
only if said user does not have a subscription to said service.

16. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 15, further comprising the steps of tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement, and of carrying out said step of presenting said interactive banner advertisement only if said user does not have a subscription to said service and said user further does not have a predetermined number of said credits.

17. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement.

18. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the step of applying said credits against a subscription to said website.

Serial Number 09/742,438

19. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said interactive banner advertisements are selected based on information stored on said user's computing device and information provided by said user.

20. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein said information stored on said user's computing device is in the form of cookies.

21. (Currently Amended) A system for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access to a website, comprising:

a computing or communications device of said user, said computing or communications device being connected to a provider of said website, over a data communications network;

client software arranged to be loaded onto said computing or communications device and arranged to participate in presentation of an interactive banner advertisement to the user after said user requests access to said website by inputting an Internet uniform resource locator, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service, said client software diverting said access request to a proxy server rather than to said website indicated by the uniform resource locator,

wherein, upon presentation of the interactive banner advertisement by said proxy server, said user is prevented from accessing said website that was requested by the user before presentation of said banner advertisement, and permitted to access to the website only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement, and wherein said user continues to be prevented from accessing the website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said network is a wireless network[[;]].

Serial Number 09/742,438

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 25 21, wherein a provider of the website downloads said client software to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website.

27. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said client software is resident on said user's computing or communications device before said user requests access to said website.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently Amended) A system as claimed in claim 29 21, wherein said client software is a plug-in to an Internet browser installed on said user's computing device.

31. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 30, wherein said plug-in is downloaded to the user's computing device when said user requests access to said website as a pre-requisite to gaining access to said website.

32. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 21 for ensuring that a user acknowledges an advertisement in exchange for access to a website, comprising:
a computing or communications device of said user, said computing or communications device being connected to a provider of said website, over a data communications network;
software arranged to be loaded onto said computing or communications device and arranged to participate in presentation of an interactive banner advertisement to the user after said

Serial Number 09/742,438

user requests access to said website, said interactive banner advertisement providing information promoting a product or service,

wherein, upon presentation of the interactive banner advertisement by said proxy server, said user is prevented from accessing said website that was requested by the user before presentation of said banner advertisement, and permitted to access to the website only if the user submits an appropriate reply to the interactive banner advertisement, and wherein said user continues to be prevented from accessing the website so long as the user fails to submit the appropriate reply wherein said website is a subscription-based service,

wherein said website is a subscription-based service, and

further comprising the steps of,

before presenting said interactive banner advertisement to the user, identifying said user and determining whether said user has a subscription to said service, and

presenting said interactive banner advertisement only if said user does not have a subscription to said service.

33. (Original) A system as claimed in claim 21, further including means for tallying credits each time the user responds correctly to an interactive banner advertisement.

34. (Previously Presented) A system as claimed in claim 33, further comprising means for applying said credits against a subscription to said website.

35-39. (Canceled)